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## Customer service culture at AEON supermarkets in Vietnam

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### Abstract

With strong competition and globalization trends like today, customers are faced with countless products, brands, prices, suppliers, etc. Businesses that want to survive and develop need to. Customer-oriented and customer-centric, bringing the highest value to customers. When customers have more demands on satisfying their needs, businesses need to have a strategy to develop close relationships with customers, which is also a way to maintain existing customer loyalty and build relationships with potential customers. AEON Vietnam is a supermarket system from Japan. Through research, thoroughly understand the needs and habits of customers, approach and communicate with customers, manage customer information in the most systematic and effective way in order to offer the best products and services, the most suitable service that meets the needs and wants of the market.

**Keywords:** Personal needs, lifestyle, customer service, Aeon Vietnam, Japanese supermarket n.

### 1. Introduction

Our country is in a period of prosperous economic development, an important contribution to that development is the business sector. When it comes to business, business people always want to benefit from their customers. And to achieve that they have to take care of their customers in the best possible way. From there, the "Customer Service" stage was born. So what is "Customer Service"?

Customer service is the entire interaction and support activities of a business to customers during the process of experiencing products and services to meet their desired needs. It can also be understood that customer service is the accompanying services to complete the marketing transaction process to ensure that the needs and wants of customers are met. In fact, there are many businesses that understand the importance of Customer Service but have difficulty in planning, implementing and implementing it and are still confused, so the Customer Service Culture is gradually forgotten.

Until the business downturn, companies had to face a significant decline in revenue, resulting in staff reductions and downsizing of services. In difficult times, service should be even more of a priority: the more customers you attract, the quicker and easier it will be to get through the crisis. Many marketers of large companies are reverting to a "service first" attitude. However, while a lot of companies "sell" excellent customer service, some companies just stop at the "delivery" level. The main problem is that very few businesses have ever actually served their customers. Customer dissatisfaction sometimes stems not from a poor product, but from an unhappy experience. Because what customers "feel" about you is not just the product they buy, but the customer service you give them.

Grasping that, AEON Vietnam Co., Ltd. has made full use of their capacity to be able to do good services for customers. They also set a leading motto for many years, which is "Continuous efforts to bring a great shopping experience to Vietnamese consumers". The interesting thing when coming to AEON is that customers feel like they are shopping in Japan. Because the Japanese customer service culture permeates every activity of this General Department Store. It is a meticulous, devoted little attention to every little detail to bring good results the most. In the process of development, AEON always keeps up with modern consumption trends and consumer concerns to create new activities and experiences, along with many new services for customers to have better experiences. The most complete shopping. Below, we will learn more about the customer services of AEON Vietnam General Department Store today and propose methods for taking good care of customer service in the period of business development new business.

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## 2. Theoretical basis

### 2.1 Basic concepts of service culture

Business Culture is considered a valuable asset, the foundation for building and developing a business. In today's era, this topical issue has been widely studied and applied in many countries around the world, especially in the service business. Some previous notions that the competitive advantage of a company or an enterprise mainly depends on strong financial capacity, high technology level, favorable business environment or abundant human resources have become popular should be backward. In today's environment, the most valuable asset for every business is culture. Business culture is one of the important factors constituting the success of a business, making the business stand out from the competition and gain a loyal customer base.

For a long time, many researchers have tried to define and measure service quality. For example, Lehtinen & Lehtinen (1982) argue that service quality must be assessed on two aspects, (1) service delivery process and (2) service results. Gronroos (1984) also suggested two components of service quality, namely (1) technical quality, which is what the customer receives, and (2) functional quality, which interprets the service provided how.

**Basis for proposed research model:** Based on the theory of rational action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975), the theory of intended behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the theory of consumer behavior of Philip Kotler (2001), at the same time inheriting the research results of Ha Nam Khanh Giao and Tran Huu Ai (2012) using the SERVPERF scale (Cronin & Taylor, 1992) including 5 components (reliability, responsiveness, tangible means, capacity) service, empathy) and additionally (price perception, added value) to study the loyalty of customers using services in Ho Chi Minh City. Ho Chi Minh.

**In addition, customers' decision to choose shopping services includes 6 factors:** brand reputation, benefits received, and influence of acquaintances, promotions, facilities and employees. On the other hand, service quality (service quality) and service selection decision are closely related, in which, good quality service will promote customer's choice. Results of qualitative research, inheriting the studies of Ha Nam Khanh Giao and Tran Huu Ai (2012); Nguyen Quyet Thang (2017); determine the factors affecting the decision to use the service, including: (1) Reliability, (2) Responsiveness, (3) Tangible means, (4) Service capacity, (5) Empathy (the SERVPERF scale of Cronin & Taylor, 1992) represents the service quality of the Center, from which customers choose the service.

### 2.2 Factors affecting service culture at Aeon Mall Service culture model comes from Japan

Corporate culture is formed from the very first days and is the core value, most characteristic of each business. We can also easily perceive, the Japanese always stand out with very good customer service culture, which can be mentioned as: providing a free seating area for customers when coming to the shopping center. In trade, it is impossible not to mention the last culture of greeting customers of a Japanese manager. Therefore, customers easily trust businesses from Japan.

Right from the early days of establishment, AEON MALL

has always followed the criteria of serving customers with Omotenashi style. Customer satisfaction is the core of this style, and also what AEON MALL cares about most during its operation.

At AEON MALL, service attitude is one of the most important factors affecting customers' experience when visiting and shopping. Omotenashi culture at AEON MALL is highly valued and expressed through the early morning greeting activities, friendly and enthusiastic attitude towards guests of the staff, from the janitor, the security guard to the staff customer care. This is the culture has always maintained since the business began operations until now. With the operating motto "Japanese Heart, Vietnamese Smile", customer satisfaction, joy and smile is the most valuable reward that all employees working at AEON MALL want to receive. Everything that the people here are doing always comes from the heart, with the most dedication, sincerity and enthusiasm in order to bring satisfied smiles to all customers.

Omotenashi is a Japanese-style service culture, which is understood to mean "wholehearted customer service". In Japan, Omotenashi has become an art in the service industry, a measure as well as a factor that greatly affects the success of any business. Therefore, when it comes to the standard Japanese service style, many people will probably immediately know the Omotenashi culture.

The Japanese divide customer service into 5 levels including Moral (Ethical) - Manner (Polite behavior) - Service (Professional Service) - Hospitality (Hospitality) - Omotenashi, in which Omotenashi is the pinnacle.

The three basic spirits of Omotenashi are:

- Serve with all your heart
- Service beyond customer expectations
- Bring a value to the community

#### Ability to meet

Through the business philosophy "Everything we do, is for the customer". This is considered an immutable philosophy that AEON will never change, even in the quest to always find new paths. Never satisfied with the current successes, constantly striving to find ways to improve the quality of customers' lives - That is AEON's tradition, the mission of the business, and also affirms that AEON is always there to meet all the needs of potential customers.

With a lot of investment capital from abroad, AEON provides a variety of products at the supermarket system, goods in many fields to meet most of the needs of consumers. These items have clear origin, clear origin, and long shelf life and are kept at a stable price by businesses even in the context of the epidemic.

From the end of 2020, AEON MALL first implemented sales via livestream. The program is deployed at all AEON MALL shopping centers nationwide. The supermarket system cooperates with the stalls at the shopping mall, introduces and sells products in new forms, and then delivers them to customers. This is one of the company's efforts to adapt to make shopping more convenient for customers. "The move of AEON MALL shows that this unit has had a quite flexible change in business strategy to "living with the epidemic".

Adding more forms of online purchase, via app, phone number or QR code suitable for all customers. For food items that will be delivered quickly before 16:00 every day, household electronics will be delivered in 1-2 days. Free

delivery according to the regulations, installation support for customers.

### Ph level of tangible facilities

Faced with the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenging way in limiting contact between people, the application of information technology at AEON MALL also promotes its effectiveness. Launching forms of remote shopping such as: purchase via phone number and QR code, purchase via mobile application. These forms of shopping help customers who do not have much time to go to the supermarket can easily order and receive goods quickly within the day, especially suitable for the complicated epidemic situation in Vietnam.

**Software technology:** In the 4.0 technology era, the application of software that directly interacts with customers aims to increase the level of customer understanding, collect opinions from customers, thereby improving the customer care process customer care. Thanks to the integrated software, sales staff at AEON MALL supermarket will easily recognize many customers, coordinate with other technical departments in the business to carry out activities such as marketing, selling goods, receive complaints, provide after-sales services. The right level of service to maximize profits and benefit customers. The software also helps leading technology companies to consider and assess the effectiveness and adjust corporate culture that remains is the original core values.

In addition, AEON MALL also designed waiting areas, free wifi network for customers to rest when visiting and shopping at the center. Other support facilities such as free bus routes to AEON Binh Tan, Tan Phu and Binh Duong.

### Service capabilities

Service capacity, also known as the level of staff. These are the people who will directly provide services to customers, so their level of knowledge and skills greatly affects the company's brand and contributes significantly to customer satisfaction. A good, enthusiastic staff, imbued with the Japanese Omotenashi service culture philosophy, will be a solid foundation for the success of AEON MALL.

AEON has established a "Code of Conduct" to guide and orient all members working here. The business aims to be a trusted brand that sets itself apart from the competition, while winning the trust and loyalty of its customers. And in order to maintain this loyalty, there is no better way than all AEON employees to focus on constantly focusing on creating new values for customers.

### Empathy

Empathy is also known as understanding and support from businesses not only with customers but also with the community. At AEON Vietnam, there are the following support programs:

- Deferred payment policy applies to students and customers aged 21-60. Simple procedures, low late fees, quick approval and no need to mortgage assets.
- Customer care system through the operator, via email or on social networks fanpage to settle the comments, proactively contact customer care.
- Community activities as "AEON Environmental Foundation", "1% Club", "project building schools". The enterprise has deducted 1% of the

company's profit to launch funds to support initiatives on environmental protection, global cultural exchange and human resource development in Asia to raise awareness of all people on social issues.

### 2.3 Challenges in service culture

Challenges in the service culture at AEON can be mentioned as attracting talented employees to work at the company, spreading the core service culture of the business to all employees. Service quality must be uniform at all AEON supermarket chains so that customers do not feel the difference. In addition, in the current market economic competition, competitors such as Coop Mart, Lotte Mart will make it difficult for our business to attract customers.

Macro issues such as increased tax on plastic products, problems in waste treatment, requirements in ensuring a safe working environment, creating development conditions for employees, Laws promulgated on business ethics in Vietnam are also challenges for AEON Vietnam to maintain its customer service culture.

### 3. Research Methods

The main methods used in this thesis include: document analysis method such as: qualitative method to find the basic ideological content of the document, find out related issues. Research topic and identify the problem to be solved. Documents, articles, interviews or scientific journals related to the issue of "Customer service culture creates AEON Vietnam", because it is secondary data, there are many related documents, we need to filter to get the most accurate document for the problem. And the quantitative method "finds a way to group signs and find out the cause and effect in groups of objects", based on the literature and research sources of the qualitative method so that we can highlight the important roles importance of customer care, and answers the questions of why a customer service culture is so important, and other successful companies. Methods of collecting secondary data, this method is based on the resource's eating should when applying this method requires specific means to r ò clear, consistent h required to synthesize the research objectives, data accuracy and topicality. And the method of comparison and contrast to find the most accurate documents on the research problem as well as reliable sources of information from the internet. The old method of data collection is based on available sources, so when applying this method, it is necessary to have goals, that is, to be clear, consistent with the research objectives and the data must be accurate and timely. And find the most accurate documents on the research problem and reliable sources of information from the Internet through comparison and contrast method. In addition, there are methods to compare research results, compare the terms "domestic culture" and "foreign culture", compare between Vietnamese companies and foreign companies, to see more clearly. Cultural differences between countries. There are also some other methods to conduct surveys such as:

Interviewing is a method in which the investigator poses a series of questions to the respondent. Interviews can be structured, where the interviewer asks well-defined questions, or unstructured, where the interviewer allows respondents to sometimes answer questions. in their opinion. Questionnaire survey method: A questionnaire is a series of questions designed by the researcher for the research object

to answer. The structure of the questionnaire is usually in the form of a level assessment, answering according to the answers already classified.

Observational method: The researcher collects data and documents by himself through observation, monitoring, listening, seeing to provide data and find out the nature of the problem.

#### 4. Research results and discussion

Research shows us that to sell a product or service to a new customer, an organization must spend 6 times as much keeping and selling the product or service to old customers. "If you keep about 5% more customers with the organization, the organization can increase profits by 85%. 70% of customers with complaints will be loyal to the organization if their complaints are satisfactorily resolved. That's why businesses consciously build customer loyalty through a culture of service. Loyal customers will bring a lot of benefits for businesses. Retaining old customers is less expensive to attract new customers, which will greatly reduce marketing costs for businesses. At the same time customer loyalty will be a reliable communication channel for potential customers. They will communicate about their trading office to their friends, colleagues and other relatives. They will be the best "word of mouth" for the business. In addition, having a

loyal customer will give the business enough time to react to the new "attack tactics" of other competitors. When loyal customers are absent and other customers become stressed, management hopes to find problems with other departments and emphasize and strengthen customer relationships. Now, they find it necessary to focus on building relationships, offering more products and services to existing customers. They want to strengthen customer relationships to generate profits from the overall consumption of those customers and ensure that customers return regularly. They desire to better understand their customers and demonstrate their loyalty to them through approaches to building relationships. Long-term success will hinge on a business's ability to manage total, customer-focused conversions. AEON Mall's supermarket systems require the knowledge, people, resources and tools necessary to choose the right products and services for customers. Retaining existing customers and building relationships with them is much more profitable than attracting new customers. And a customer service culture is an important tool in making that possible.

Culture serves customers decide the success of businesses as well as the competitive element of the business relative to other competitors in the socialist-oriented market economy, such as in Vietnam. It is the business strategy of AEON Mall. Strategic business is determinant efficiency of the entire system of supermarkets, because of technology and software depends on the organizational structure tubers a business that organizational structure depends on strategic end c business. The staff in the counter area will provide services to customers according to the core culture of the business, the staff at the information desk and customer care will proceed to record information and feedback customer feedback about the service. This information should be stored in an enterprise management software system. After that, businesses will conduct information classification, storage and research to make

changes in the way customers provide services.

The characteristics of services are intangible, inseparable, heterogeneous, and non-storable. These characteristics make the management and improvement of service culture difficult to control. Understanding the characteristics of the service, the management department at AEON Mall will try to improve the quality, create a distance between the business and the competitors and to impress the customers.

To maintain a culture of customer service is how each employee at AEON Mall provides service to customers. This job is the way that each employee shows his or her abilities along with matching the ideology of working with the business. Because only when employees have the same ideology with customer service culture, they can maintain and improve their communication skills and professional qualifications. Not only for the counter staff, but the customer relations staff is also an important workforce. Customer care staff will record and add customer information to the system accurately. This helps to find and retrieve information quickly when needed. For the management level, the reports that update customer information, the customer's favorite rate for the business, the awareness level of the business compared to competitors will help to track conveniently. The application of CRM management software to the enterprise's management system is also an effective support tool to know if customers are satisfied with the quality of services provided by the business. This brings great benefits in terms of brand image management because in fact, the lack of customer awareness of the brand will reduce a lot of revenue. The problem of after-sales service, maximizing benefits for customers will be thoroughly solved in order to develop the image and brand of AEON Mall.

For the field of shopping services, the measurement of customer value will include factors and customer requirements through customer satisfaction surveys. In addition, we can conduct additional customer surveys such as face-to-face or online interviews. The data obtained from the above surveys will help businesses better understand how customers perceive their businesses and soon achieve their goals. Of course, to achieve those goals, there need to be changes in management, organizational structure, support of technology software, professional qualifications of employees. Then comes the step of analyzing the process of listening to feedback and answering customers' questions about how to serve, combined with the core business values of the business to offer practical programs to suit the needs of customers.

The above analysis shows that a customer's decision to use a service depends on the following factors: reliability, responsiveness, tangible means, service capacity and empathy. Customers will become loyal customers when they satisfy the above factors. Managers need to consider these factors when planning a business strategy. This study also shows the importance of training and developing human resources at enterprises. The training should be organized regularly, training first about the culture of the business, then the knowledge of goods, polite attitude when communicating with customers.

It can be seen that a customer service culture is part of a business's marketing strategy. It will help customers remember the business longer, decide to use the service and become a reliable "ally" when businesses face false rumors. But in order to build a customer service culture, it is

a long-term process that businesses must commit to always with the values that they have set out. In today's changing economy, it is not easy to maintain the same values. Just know that, the better a business builds a brand, the more it will reduce costs in other service delivery processes and create a reputation for its brand.

As we all know, a service perceived by consumers of high quality will be an important competitive advantage of that service. In a recent study on brand value in the Vietnamese consumer goods market (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2002) also showed that perceived quality is the most important factor creating brand value and is the most important factor in brand equity key to customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, if you grasp the components that make up the service quality of the supermarket, it will be easier for supermarket businesses to improve the quality of their supermarket services to increasingly meet the requirements of customers, which is to create customer loyalty. Thus, maintaining a customer service culture at AEON Mall is necessary in the current context, this is one of the business strategies to help businesses stay competitive in the market economy and economic crisis. Economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

In years recent very volatile, adaptation is one of the important factors to come is to exist. For AEON Vietnam, in order to adapt well to the market, it is necessary to anticipate all changes and customer needs. With the current trend, AEON has gradually transformed from focusing on product sales. Products that focus on customers, put them at the heart of the organization's activities, bring the best experience, meet the needs of customers is one of the factors that help businesses succeed today.

Today, for a service culture, it is no longer just an enterprise's approach to customer service, but it is also a sustainable culture, bridging the gap between a workplace cultures. The company's work and must always be oriented towards the important purpose is always customer-oriented. Whereas the workplace culture is collective and often employee-oriented, the service culture puts the customer at the forefront of all business goals that is the vision of the organization. Customer centricity is one of the most important factors in customer service – this is also a very true term in today's context when every business must focus on building customer service culture

The business wants to survive and develop, it is impossible to ignore the activities of the customer service departments. The role of this department has a great influence on the success because perhaps this department helps the business in attracting customers and creating a good impression so that those customers have a good buying experience. Customer's next. Customers are the most important factor in business. So starting from the customer service culture, starting from the simplest things from the insiders of the company to find solutions and specific actions such as:

Leaders should change the way in recruiting with the criteria for finding candidates. Candidates must have good customer orientation. This will be done right in the candidate interview, the recruitment department will ask questions or tests to test your ability to work with customers as well as ask if you know the objects and characteristics. of the customer or not?

Should cultivate employees' soft skills such as working skills, communicating with customers, most especially, promoting understanding, putting yourself in the position of customers. This training enhances the knowledge of the employees. To achieve the highest efficiency, businesses should have short courses for employees to interact with experienced teaching staff.

It is advisable for departments that can interact with customers in many ways, even those that are not in charge. Not only each customer care department touches customers, but all departments have certain interactions.

**Feedback and surveys:** By capturing customer feedback and conducting customer satisfaction surveys. Implementation based on feedback and surveys from customers helps your employees instill a deep sense of service culture.

**Reward employees who make customers happy:** In order to have a customer-centric culture, it is necessary to have a team of employees who are able to interact well and satisfy customers on a personal level. Employees can be rewarded for providing outstanding customer service and always going beyond what is needed to satisfy customers.

**Respect and listen to customers:** Respecting and pleasing customers is AEON's priority. If the customer has a complaint, listen with respect, summarize the customer's complaint and advise, explain the instructions to the customer, the customer's complaint needs to be reviewed and answered. Timely. In all cases, it is necessary to keep a calm attitude before the partner's impatient behavior (if any), calm the tense atmosphere and always show a demanding attitude, ready to cooperate with customers.

Patiently listen to the feedback of customers, do not argue right away, but always show a market-oriented attitude, ready to absorb the reasonable comments of customers. After the problem is solved, it is necessary to contact the customer to thank him, make a good impression to keep the relationship with the customer. Absolutely no negative expressions and attitudes when working with customers such as anger, narcissism, being annoyed, harassing, causing difficulties.

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